

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGRE-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00  
EB-07 FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00  
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PM-05 H-01 L-03 PA-01 PRS-01 /109 W  
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P R 222121Z JUL 77  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2754  
INFO AMEMBASSY CARCAS  
USSOUTHCOM  
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA  
AMCONSUL CALI  
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, ECON, CO  
SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. THE REOPENING OF CONGRESS ON JULY 20 FEATURED A DEFENSE OF HIS ADMINISTRATION'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS BY PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND AN INTENSIFICATION OF THE SPLITS IN BOTH MAJOR PARTIES AS A RESULT OF STRUGGLES FOR CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS. THE GOVERNMENT AND THE COFFEE FEDERATION HAVE BEEN MAKING ADJUSTMENTS IN RESPONSE TO DECLINING COFFEE PRICES. VIOLENT RIOTS OCCURRED IN FLORENCIA AND THERE WERE SEVERAL BOMBINGS IN BOGOTA. TWO KIDNAP VICTIMS WERE FREED IN BOGOTA AND A THIRD KIDNAP VICTIM WAS FOUND DEAD. THERE ARE UNCONFIRMED RUMORS OF MAJOR CABINET CHANGES. END SUMMARY.

2. CONGRESS OPENS REGULAR SESSION. THE FOCUS OF PUBLIC  
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ATTENTION WAS SHIFTED TO CONGRESS AS THAT BODY OPENED ITS REGULAR 1977 SESSION ON JULY 20. THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE OPENING CEREMONY WAS THE LENGTHY SPEECH DELIVERED BY PRESIDENT LOPEZ, WHO USED THE OCCASION TO DEFEND HIS ADMINISTRATION'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS (SEE PARA 3 BELOW). PRESIDENT LOPEZ ALSO WARNED AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY OF VERBAL VIOLENCE GETTING OUT OF CONTROL AND POSSIBLY LEADING TO TRUE VIOLENCE. FOREIGN AFFAIRS RECEIVED

ONLY PASSING MENTION, AS THE PRESIDENT NOTED THE NEED FOR CONTINUITY IN THIS AREA. THE OPENING WAS MARKED BY STORMY BATTLES OVER THE LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN CONGRESS. CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORTERS OF LIBERAL PARTY PRE-CANDIDATE JULIO CESAR TURBAY DOMINATED THE PROCEEDINGS, AFTER SUPPORTERS OF EX-PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS RESTREPO FAILED TO BLOCK VOTING PENDING AN INVESTIGATION OF CHARGES OF MALFEASANCE AGAINST TURBAY SUPPORTERS WHO PREVIOUSLY HELD THESE POSITIONS. LLERAS SUPPORTERS, FOLLOWING THEIR FAILURE, WALKED OUT OF THE SESSION AND REFUSED TO TAKE PART IN THE PROCEEDINGS, AS IN SUBSEQUENT VOTING ON COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP POSITIONS. FOLLOWERS OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY'S ALVARO GOMEZ WING, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF TURBAY SUPPORTERS, SWEEPED FROM CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES THE OPPOSING OSPINA-PASTRANA WING OF THAT PARTY. ALL CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS ARE NOW HELD BY TURBAY OR ALVARO GOMEZ SUPPORTERS, WITH LLERAS AND OSPINA-PASTRANA FOLLOWERS RELEGATED TO SEPARATE OPPOSITION ROLES. THE OPEN BITTERNESS BETWEEN THE TURBAY AND LLERAS WINGS OF THE LIBERAL PARTY SEEMS TO HAVE INTENSIFIED THE SPLIT WITHIN THIS PARTY.

3. LOPEZ DEFENDS ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE. IN HIS ADDRESS TO THE CONGRESS, PRESIDENT LOPEZ OFFERED A VIGOROUS DEFENSE OF HIS ADMINISTRATION'S ECONOMIC POLICIES, BLAMING THE HIGH RATE OF INFLATION AND UNREALIZED DEVELOPMENT GOALS ON EXTERNAL AND UNCONTROLLABLE FORCES, AND CITING FIGURES FOR PRIVATE AND PUBLIC INVESTMENT AS EVIDENCE OF A HEALTHY AND GROWING ECONOMY.

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PRIVATE INVESTMENT, HE SAID, WOULD GROW BY 45 PERCENT IN 1977 AND GDP BY A RECORD AMOUNT. THE ACTIVITIES OUTLINED IN THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN HAD IN FACT PRODUCED REAL AND POSITIVE RESULTS, THE PRESIDENT EMPHASIZED, SUCH AS A THOUSAND NEW WATER SYSTEMS, 150 NEW SEWERAGE SYSTEMS, A DOUBLING OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH'S BUDGET AND SIGNIFICANT EXPANSION IN SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION. IN SPITE OF THE MANY POSITIVE NUMBERS THE PRESIDENT WAS ABLE TO PRESENT, WITH INFLATION RUNNING AT 35 TO 40 PERCENT, WE BELIEVE THAT MANY COLOMBIANS REMAIN UNCONVINCED.

4. COFFEE AND THE PESO. THE GOVERNMENT AND THE COFFEE FEDERATION, WHO HAVE BEEN GRADUALLY LOWERING THE "REINTEGRO" (AMOUNT OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS NATIONALIZED PER UNIT EXPORT) AND ADJUSTING TAXES IN RESPONSE TO THE DECLINE IN WORLD COFFEE PRICES, HAVE ADOPTED A WAIT-AND-SEE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LATEST SHARP DROP IN THE NEW YORK PRICE OF COFFEE. COLOMBIANS DO NOT BELIEVE THE PRICE OF LESS THAN \$2.00 PER POUND IS REAL AND EXPECT A SLIGHT RALLY.

5. PUBLIC ORDER. A CITIZEN'S PROTEST AGAINST THE IMPOSITION OF ELECTRICITY RATIONING IN THE TOWN OF FLORENCIA LED TO TWO DAYS OF SPORADIC RIOTING AND VANDALISM BEFORE ARMY TROOPS

WERE ABLE TO RESTORE ORDER. THE VIOLENCE IN THE CAPITAL OF CAQUETA INTENDANCY LEFT ONE MAN DEAD AND A NUMBER OF INJURED IN ADDITION TO CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE TO BOTH PRIVATE AND MUNICIPAL PROPERTY. IN BOGOTA, THE ONLY SIGNIFICANT VIOLENCE OCCURED ON COLOMBIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY, JULY 20, WHEN FIVE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS SUFFERED MODERATE TO MINOR DAMAGE IN BOMBING ATTACKS; A MAOIST TERRORIST GROUP - THE PEDRO LEON ARBOLEDA COMMAND - ALLEGEDLY CLAIMED CREDIT FOR THE BOMBINGS.

6. KIDNAPPINGS. TWO YOUNG BUSINESSMEN, JACK ABADI AND EDUARDO HELO, WERE RELEASED BY THEIR KIDNAPPERS ON 17 JULY, LEAVING ONLY ONE KNOWN KIDNAP VICTIM IN THE CAPTIAL STILL IN THE HANDS OF HIS CAPTORS. ABADI AND HELO HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED SEPARATELY IN BOGOTA OVER THREE MONTHS AGO AND HAD BEEN HELD BY THE SAME GANG UNTIL THEIR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RELEASE. ALSO IN BOGOTA TEN ASSOCIATES OF FORMER ELN GUERRILLA LUIS FERNANDO TAMAYO, CAPTURED THE PREVIOUS WEEK IN A POLICE OPERATION IN WHICH TAMAYO WAS KILLED, WERE RELEASED FOR LACK OF EVIDENCE BY A MILITARY COURT. THREEE OTHER TAMAYO ASSOCIATES, SUSPECTED OF INVOLVMENT IN TAMAYO'S KIDNAPPING OPERATIONS, REMAIN UNDER ARREST. IN VALLE, POLICE ANNOUNCED THE DISCOVERY OF THE BODY OF AN ELDERLY RANCH OWNER WHO HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED IN JUNE.

7. CABINET CHANGES RUMOURED. UNCONFIRMED RUMOURS OF IMMINENT CHANGES

IN THE CABINET , SPECIFICALLY OF THE MINISTERS OF GOVERNMENT, AGRICULTURE, PUBLIC WORKS AND PUBLIC HEALTH, ARE CURRENTLY CIRULATING. IN THE MOST IMPORTANT POSITION, MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT RAFAEL PARDO BUELVAS, A SUPPORTER OF CONSERVATIVE LEADER ALVARO GOMEZ, WILL REPORTEDLY BE REPLACED BECAUSE OF ACCUSTAIONS BY LLERAS LIVERALS AND OSPINA-PASTRANA CONSERVATIVES OF ALLEGED PARTIALITY TOWARDS TURBAY LIBERALS AND HIW OWN FACTION OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY. FORMER MINISTER OF MINES AND FELLOW ALVARISTA JAIME GARCIA PARRA IS CONSIDERED A LIKELY REPLACEMENT FOR PARDO BUELVAS.  
DREXLER

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## Message Attributes

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